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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7457th meeting
Friday, 5 June 2015, 9.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedures, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Alexander Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Hug, who is joining today's meeting via video teleconference from Kyiv.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Feltman.

Mr. Feltman: Since the Council last met on Ukraine on 6 March (see S/PV.7400), while the situation in eastern Ukraine has remained tenuous, we have had some grounds for hope. The ceasefire continues to largely hold in most parts of the conflict zone, and the number and pace of casualties have generally slowed. Importantly, the political process aimed at full implementation of the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, adopted on 12 February, is finally under way. I also wish to reiterate that, had it not been for the continued diplomatic efforts of Ukraine, France, Germany and the Russian Federation in the Normandy format and the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), we would likely be faced with a more challenging situation. The full implementation of Minsk is sine qua non for leading eastern Ukraine and the country out of conflict. The continued non-implementation of various provisions of the agreement entails a dangerous limbo.

Mr. Alexander Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, will brief the Council in detail on the security situation in eastern Ukraine, including on Wednesday's hostilities. However, I would be remiss not to note the grave concern of the United Nations about the ongoing, almost daily deadly clashes, the use of heavy weaponry, the laying of minefields on both sides of the contact line, the reported continued presence of foreign mercenaries on Ukrainian soil and the reported flows of heavy weaponry into eastern Ukraine, all of which run contrary to key provisions of the Minsk package of measures.

The latest death toll since the outbreak of the conflict stands at over 6,400 people. Since the signing of the Minsk package, some additional 400 lives have been lost. Sadly, just on Wednesday, 3 June, according to the latest figures from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, an additional 28 people, including nine civilians, were killed in deadly clashes around Marinka. This is a sharp increase over the past weeks, particularly as heavy shelling elsewhere in Donetsk reportedly continued throughout yesterday. We are either looking at a return to a deepening, intractable conflict or a momentary upsurge in parts of the conflict zone. We cannot afford either scenario. The ceasefire must be fully respected and the protection of civilians a priority. I would also like to stress that all concerned should refrain from using threats of violence and military leverage to influence the political process.

The humanitarian situation also remains dire. Ukraine now ranks among the top 10 countries in terms of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with over 1.3 million IDPs. There were none just over a year ago. In the last week of May alone, 16,000 people were displaced. Similarly, nearly 870,000 Ukrainians have sought asylum, residence or other forms of legal stay in neighbouring countries; 10,000 of those were in the second half of May alone. The number of displaced will only grow if the violence continues.

Of immediate concern is the now complete lack of humanitarian access across the contact line in either direction, which has been preventing lifesaving humanitarian assistance from reaching those most in need. All parties to the conflict must immediately guarantee unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel and cargo, both by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Government of Ukraine must remove all bureaucratic impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the 2 June decree issued by the de facto authorities in Donetsk that prohibits international NGOs from operating in non-Government controlled Donetsk must be immediately revoked.

Since this crisis began, we have seen the Council convene dozens of times. Security Council members have repeatedly raised concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation. Yet the $316-million 2015 humanitarian response plan to assist victims of this conflict faces a shortfall of $221 million. The Secretary-General calls on Member States to urgently translate their concern into action and to fully fund the humanitarian response. This will ensure that the capacity and resources are in place to reach those in desperate need the moment that access is restored.

On the political-diplomatic front, we are most encouraged by the continued and critical work in the Normandy format, with the next political director-level meeting scheduled for 10 June in Paris, by the diligent efforts of the Trilateral Contact Group, and by the commencement of the four working groups on political, security, humanitarian and economic issues. In our view, these three interconnected mechanisms are all equally important pieces of the political and diplomatic process, and we are heartened to see that the international community is fully committed to these efforts.

With regard to the working groups specifically, we understand that, although they have not been without challenges, each group has met at least twice and that the atmosphere has mainly been constructive. The political working group has, we understand, focused its energies on the modalities of local elections, which also includes finding common ground on the special status law. Equally important efforts to fmd political solutions to some of the most pressing economic, humanitarian and security questions are also under way.

From 7 to 10 May, the Secretary-General visited Poland, Ukraine and Russia. During his visits, he held a number of constructive meetings with regard to the conflict in Ukraine, including with Presidents Poroshenko and Putin. Although they had varying views on the conflict in the east, both Presidents reassured the Secretary-General of their continued commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It was evident that, although the road ahead would be long and arduous, the full implementation of the Minsk agreements is possible if all concerned fulfil their obligations and engage in good faith.

The Secretary-General will continue his good offices role on Ukraine, and remains open to considering how best to further support the OSCE, as well as the implementation of the Minsk agreements more broadly. The critical work of the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, evinced by its latest report of 1 June, as well as of the humanitarian and development actors on the ground, remain priority areas for our Organization.

The package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the reinstatement of full control of the State border by the Government of Ukraine, has a deadline. That deadline is less than six months away. As we have stated on a number of occasions, neither Ukraine nor the region nor the international community can afford to have this process fail. Above all, we cannot forget the tremendous human cost of the conflict, which can only begin to be addressed through respect of the ceasefire and fulfilment of the political, economic, social, humanitarian and human rights provisions of Minsk.

I would like to close by reiterating the United Nations unwavering support to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The people of Ukraine deserve nothing less.

The President: I thank Mr. Feltman for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hug.

Mr. Hug: At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Ukraine. On 27 February (see S/PV.7395), Ambassador Apakan gave the Council the most recent update on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in the aftermath of the signing of the Minsk package of measures.

Today, I am reporting a significant deterioration of the security situation in Ukraine. The violence witnessed in and around the town of Marinka, close to the line of contact, constitutes a new worrying development in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. After the signature of the Minsk package of measures, large parts of the conflict region had initially remained quiet for months. This was particularly true for the Luhansk region. However, throughout all this period, fighting has continued in some hot spots, such as in the surroundings of the destroyed airport of the city of Donetsk, and in the area of the city of Mariupol around the village of Shyrokyne.

The OSCE Mission, during that period, continuously observed a pattern of heavy fighting

in these two locations, with occasional flare-ups in other places. In the beginning of May, the security situation started to deteriorate further. Towns in the Donetsk region that had been quiet for months, such as Horlivka and Hranitne, saw increased violence, and again there were civilian casualties, mostly due to the indiscriminate use of heavy weapons. Significantly, the violence has also spread to the Luhansk region, with villages immediately north of Luhansk city — namely, Shchastia and Stanytsia Luhanska — and others further north-west along the contact line now witnessing regular shelling and small-arms fire engagements.

The level of violence seen at Marinka in this context does not necessarily represent a further intensification of violence. The Mission has, after all, witnessed hundreds of shells fall in and around Donetsk airport, fired by both sides for many days. Marinka instead seems to represent a possible new development — a refocusing of weaponry and personnel. Before, violence was concentrated north and north-west of Donetsk city, with the economically and strategically important town of Avdiivka to the north the apparent focus. Marinka does not necessarily mean that this objective has changed, but perhaps the means have.

Immediately following the signing of the Minsk package, the Mission witnessed the withdrawal of some heavy weapons from the contact line. It visited so-called heavy weapons holding areas where all sides stored such weapons. Over time, however, the Mission has increasingly noted irregularities. Weapons previously recorded are now often missing. In the meantime, the Mission has noted the movement and presence of heavy weapons — not to mention the obvious use of such weapons — in areas where they are prohibited by the Minsk arrangements.

In many cases, the Mission has also been prevented from accessing heavy weapons holding areas. It has also been denied entry to specific areas, notably along the Russian-Ukrainian international border. The Mission's unmanned aerial vehicles have been jammed on a regular basis, causing interference in the control of those vehicles and their video feed. Our monitors have also faced threats and intimidation and have even been fired upon, all of which constitutes efforts to prevent the Mission from monitoring adherence to the Minsk package, in particular the provision relating to the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the contact line.

Despite these obstacles — and mostly because of the bravery of dedicated and professional monitors on the ground — the Mission has been able to effectively monitor the situation on the ground. On the basis of extensive first-hand evidence of violations gathered by our 375 monitors on the ground in Donbas and our unarmed aerial vehicles in the sky, I can report with confidence on the situation there.

Our assessment from the ground is that tension levels have increased and that ceasefire violations are becoming more frequent and more severe. In particular, the reintroduction of Grad rockets and other multiple-launch rocket systems is cause for added concern. Although negotiations are always necessary, these developments — and in particular the events in Marinka — serve as a stark reminder for all sides of the need to resolve their difference at the negotiation table.

The Minsk agreements form an integrated whole and prescribe a ceasefire and a political process towards the normalization of the situation. They remain the only available framework for peace. In that context, the process of implementation of these agreements falls within the remit of the Trilateral Contact Group, chaired by Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini, with whom we cooperate very closely. The Mission coordinates the working group on security of the Trilateral Contact Group, one of the working groups established under measure 13 of the Minsk package. That working group has, to date, held three meetings, the most recent of which was held on 2 June, just before the events around Marinka. The working group has the task of increasing security in the conflict zone. This now includes a plan to withdraw tanks and certain weapons with a calibre smaller than 100 millimetres and a plan to de-escalate the situation around one of the main hotspots, in the village of Shyrokyne, to the east of Mariupol.

Initially, issues of format had a negative impact on the meetings of the working group. However, the most recent meeting, held on 2 June, proved to be constructive, and a material discussion on issues was achieved between the sides. Despite the fact that some issues remain open, that process of discussion and of mutual engagement regarding the situation on the ground must continue.

A role in the peace process is also played by the joint centre for control and coordination. This structure consists of military representatives from Ukraine and the Russian Federation and operates inside the conflict zone. The Mission closely monitors the work of this structure and must report that the joint centre still does not operate jointly. The sides also maintain

separate ceasefire violation logs, one by the Ukrainian armed forces and one by the Russian Federation armed forces representation to the joint centre, suggesting a persisting structural split in their work. If the sides would resolve to work jointly, the joint centre could play an important role in avoiding or stopping ceasefire violations towards a full implementation of the Minsk documents.

The humanitarian situation in the conflict zone continues to be a matter of much concern. As reported by the Government of Ukraine, there are now at least 1.3 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine, which is symptomatic of how the conflict is affecting the civilian population in Donbas. The majority of those are elderly people, women and children, who are particularly exposed to the consequences of the conflict. Civilians continue to pay an unacceptable price. They are killed and wounded, as both sides continue to place military positions in and around civilian infrastructure. Their property and livelihoods have been destroyed. The Mission has also noted the temporary closure of Ukraine's biggest coke and chemical plant in Avdiivka due to targeted and sustained shelling.

There is also a significant amount of landmines and unexploded ordnance in conflict-affected areas, which poses a major threat to the lives of civilians and to recovery efforts. Ongoing hostilities have had an impact on residential areas and basic services infrastructure, including gas pipelines and the water supply, which has severely limited access to safe drinking water for civilians. The latter is of particular concern with the summer months approaching.

Compounding the difficult situation facing civilians is a permit system in operation all along the contact line. The delivery of humanitarian aid and medical supplies and normal commerce have been severely affected, resulting in a worsening of the living conditions of people living in the conflict zone. With access across the contact line, particularly in the Luhansk region, almost at a standstill, people-to-people contact has been hugely disrupted, resulting in divided communities and even families.

The Mission will not lose sight of these aspects of the conflict and is working, as mandated, on related tasks throughout Ukraine. We continue to facilitate humanitarian assistance where possible and within the remit of our mandate. In doing so, we closely cooperate with the United Nations and its agencies. We seek to be helpful to the population through our broad and robust presence on the ground. We work on the facilitation of localized ceasefires and infrastructure repairs across the contact line. Such efforts, combined with our engagement on human rights issues, gender and dialogue facilitation, will help to consolidate the basis on which the implementation of the political part of the Minsk agreements is built.

Allow me to reiterate that developments around Marinka are worrying, suggesting that the military track has not been abandoned in favour of the political one. Those events underline the need to break the cycle of violence now before further escalation takes place.

We urgently call on all sides to return to the negotiating table and make use of the negotiation framework set up in the context of the Trilateral Contact Group. The Mission will continue to implement its mandate with impartiality and in close cooperation with all sides, in the context of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. We stand ready to assist in the implementation of the Minsk agreements and thereby contribute to the restoration of peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Hug for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting at short notice. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Alexander Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, for their assessments of and briefings on the reality on the ground in Donbas, eastern Ukraine.

When in February Russian-backed forces occupied Debaltseve in violation of existing ceasefire agreements, many worried that that violation would not be the last and that, just like the September 2014 Minsk agreements, the February 2015 agreement was also signed only to be broken. The only question was when.

For some time now, the OSCE Mission has been reporting violations of the Minsk agreements and an increased movement of heavy weaponry in the territories held by the illegal militants. For example, the 3 June OSCE Mission report states that the Mission observed the movement of a large amount of heavy weapons in areas controlled by the so-called Donetsk People's Republic — generally in a westerly direction towards the contact line — close to Marinka, preceding

and during the fighting. Between 10.30 p.m. on 2 June and 5.30 a.m. on 3 June, the Mission — positioned in the Tekstilshchik area of Donetsk city, controlled by the so-called Donetsk People's Republic — made a number of observations. It observed, inter alia, eight tracked armoured vehicles moving west, four of which were main battle tanks, at 10.30 p.m.; four main battle tanks at 11.03 p.m.; a military-type truck moving west, towing a 122-millimetre artillery piece, at 11.45 p.m.; two T-64 battle tanks moving west at 4.30 a.m.; and a column of one infantry fighting vehicle, three military trucks — one carrying an ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft gun — and two T-72 main battle tanks moving west at 4.50 a.m. Such reports have been increasingly frequent in the last few days.

The military attack against the Ukrainian positions in Marinka and Krasnogorivka and the use of multiple rocket launcher systems against Pisky, Nevelske and Vodiane in the pre-dawn hours of 3 June are a most serious blow to the increasingly fragile status quo of the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Under attack, the Ukrainian military has had no choice but to inform the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission that in order to defend themselves they would need to move weapons toward the line of contact to respond to these attacks by Russian-separatist forces.

Notably, the Special Monitoring Mission made several attempts to contact the leaders of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, including the self-proclaimed Prime Minister, Parliamentary Speaker, Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff, in order to facilitate a cessation to the fighting around Marinka. None of the calls were taken. According to the Mission staff, all were either unavailable or did not wish to speak. This is not how anyone caring for a fragile ceasefire would behave. On the contrary, such behaviour indicates a clear intent to go on the offensive in breach of all existing agreements. Notably, according to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, last week, outgoing automatic grenade launcher fire from within the city was heard, indicating that the so-called Donetsk People's Republic is using residential areas to launch their attacks, posing deliberate and grave risks to the local population.

Furthermore, the self-proclaimed leaders of the illegal armed groups do not hide their intention to seek more territory. Just recently the self-proclaimed militant boss Zakharchenko told journalists: "Slaviansk, Konstantynivka, Krasnoarmiysk are towns of the Donetsk People's Republic", indicating intent to take them by force. Little does it matter to him and his peers that they have no legitimate claim whatsoever on the sovereign territory of the State of Ukraine and its people, to which and to whom he and his peers, supported and armed by Russia, have done and continue to do incalculable damage.

The Council has put its weight behind the Minsk agreements, unequivocally demanding their implementation in resolution 2202 (2015). Among other things, these agreements demanded full withdrawal of heavy weapons, foreign armed formations, military equipment and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine, called for safe, free and unrestricted access for the monitors of the Special Monitoring Mission in all parts of eastern Ukraine, and stressed the release of all hostages. However, all points of the Minsk agreements have been ignored or wilfully breached by the proxy militants.

Persistent flows of foreign fighters and weapons from the Russian Federation, as noted in the latest report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, continue to fuel the conflict. Ukraine's eastern borders remain open to the supply of arms and heavy weapons. Russian soldiers have been captured on Ukrainian soil. Russian soldiers continue to die anonymously on the Ukrainian soil. Thanks to arms supplies, the illegal militants have a larger and better equipped military force than quite a few European States and NATO members; it is probably the largest illegal army ever. The comings and goings across the border of individuals in military uniforms without insignia, and most recently with the insignia of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, as reported by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission.

OSCE monitors can observe less than 1 per cent of the conflict border. If this is happening before their eyes, it is quite easy to guess what is happening in places that they cannot observe, where there are no international monitors. OSCE observers continue to be intimidated and, as noted earlier, threatened and systematically denied access by the illegal Russian militant proxies; OSCE unmanned aerial vehicles are jammed. The training, arming and financing of militants continues unimpeded. Heavy weapons have not been completely withdrawn, have been moved around a great deal and are being returned to the frontline. Ukrainian coal is being smuggled out of the country and into Russia in broad daylight while Ukraine itself suffers from a coal

shortage. The so-called humanitarian convoys continue their comings and goings as if eastern Ukraine were Russia's own backyard. Prisoner exchanges are stalling. The former United Nations peacekeeper, Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko, remains illegally imprisoned. Oleg Sentsov and other Ukrainian citizens are being illegally detained in Russia.

We support the efforts of the United Nations, the OSCE and other international actors aimed at finding solutions to this conflict, including through the strengthened good offices of the Secretary-General. We call on the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts and act fast, before the conflict claims more lives and flares up once again. We also support the idea of strengthening the United Nations presence on the ground, including through the setting up of a United Nations peace support office.

And yet today we reiterate our strong support for the independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, with Crimea as an integral part. And yet today, because of a Russian-supported asymmetrical war accompanied by an aggressive propaganda campaign, Crimea remains occupied and Ukraine finds itself among the top 10 countries in terms of the number of internally displaced persons. The conflict has claimed some 6,500 lives, while many more — including the children of eastern Ukraine — are wounded or displaced, living in subhuman conditions and constant fear.

Today, as tensions risk to explode once again into open military conflict, sadly, Russia chooses once again to blame the victim, Ukraine, for defending itself, while protecting and arming the illegal militants. We have said time and again that it is up to Russia to rein in the illegal militants and put an end to this bloody conflict which it started with the occupation of Crimea over a year ago. For its part, Ukraine has done and continues to do everything within its power to uphold the fragile ceasefire agreement. But like any country under attack, Ukraine has the right and the duty before its citizens to defend itself in the face of aggression. No one can take that right away.

As the illegal militants and Russian proxies continue their blatant attempts to change facts on the ground, we must stand firm with the people of Ukraine and the United Nations Charter in condemning such criminal efforts. We call on all the parties to respect all existing agreements and the ceasefire and redouble their efforts to move forward in the Trilateral Contact Group.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have been discussing the situation in Ukraine since February 2014. At that time, there was an agreement between the President and the opposition. If that agreement had been implemented, Kyiv would have implemented constitutional reform by the end of last year and we would have observed a gradual normalization of and democratic development in Ukraine. Instead, a different logic has been in place, supported by people who want to see their political preferences for the future of Ukraine and its entire population prevail. This is the root of a tragic situation that has gone on for too long. We need to put an end to it. That is why the Minsk agreements exist.

We wish to express our gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, and the Deputy Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Mr. Alexander Hug, for their briefings. We share the great concern at the resurgence of military activity in Donbas. We need to take measures to stabilize the situation. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the OSCE and the Joint Centre for Control and Coordination.

The package of measures for implementing the Minsk agreements adopted on 12 February gives a concise and clear road map for settling the Ukrainian crisis. The Security Council unanimously supported the document in resolution 2202 (2015), assuming its part of political responsibility for settling the situation in Ukraine. Therefore, here in the Security Council, we need to deal with the causes of the ongoing escalation.

Almost four months have gone by since 12 February, yet what has been done to implement the package of measures? Pursuant to paragraph 4, on the first day after the withdrawal of heavy weapons, a dialogue should have begun on the modalities for conducting local elections in line with Ukrainian legislation and laws on the special status of Donbas, which were adopted back in the autumn of 2014. The Supreme Council of Ukraine — the Verkhovna Rada — was required only to adopt a law on this territory with respect to its special status. Instead, however, the Ukrainian parliament has introduced amendments that were not agreed to by Donetsk and Luhansk and which were not acceptable to them, and the territory itself was declared to be

occupied, which completely subverted the agreements reached in Minsk. The amendments simply overlooked the adoption of the special status and did not provide for local elections.

Kyiv has begun to toughen its rhetoric, saying that elections could only take place once the south-east of Ukraine was under its full control. Over all this time, Kyiv has refused to have direct dialogue with the representatives of Dombas, despite provisions for such dialogue in paragraphs 4, 9, 11 and 12 of the package of measures. This is one of the obvious reasons why it has been so difficult to start negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group and its subgroups.

In violation of paragraph 5 of the package of measures, Kyiv has also not adopted the amnesty law which would prohibit any punishment for persons involved in the activities taking place in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Moreover, the Ukrainian leadership has repeatedly stated publicly that it does not intend to comply with that provision.

One of the central elements in the implementation package is instituting constitutional reforms by the end of the year. The parameters of those reforms were outlined in Minsk with the active participation of the leaders of the Normandy quartet. Paragraph 11 states in black and white that decentralization must be implemented while taking into account the particularities of specific districts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as agreed on with the representatives of those districts. The package includes provisions on the right to linguistic self-determination, the creation of people's militias by decision of local councils, the expansion of local Governments' powers to appoint chief prosecutors and judges, and the conclusion of agreements with Kyiv in various areas, as well as the implementation of cross-border cooperation with Russia.

Kyiv finally established a constitutional commission on 3 March that included foreign experts but not a single representative of Donetsk and Luhansk, whose proposals for constitutional reform were simply ignored. Kyiv's refusal to comply with the humanitarian and socioeconomic provisions of the package of measures presents the population of Donbas with serious challenges. The noose of the economic blockade around Donetsk and Luhansk is being drawn tighter and tighter. The Kyiv officials do not hide the fact that those restrictive measures are purely punitive, saying that the people of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics are being punished for their support of the volunteers. People have been cut off from social benefits and access to food and medicines is difficult, since commercial transport is not being allowed through. Kyiv has not reacted to the remonstrations of international humanitarian and human-rights workers regarding the fact that it is children and the elderly, the most vulnerable, who suffer.

Thanks to humanitarian assistance from Russia, the people of Donbas are surviving in a literal sense. We have already sent 28 convoys with more than 36,000 tons of humanitarian deliveries in food, daily necessities and medicines. The Ukrainian border guards and customs officers finally began recently to participate in monitoring them, something we have invited them to do from the start. It is encouraging that Switzerland recently contributed by sending a significant delivery of reagents for purifying drinking water. But the basic problem of difficult access for humanitarian assistance remains, thanks to Kyiv's bureaucratic obstacles. In addition to all this, the response to appeals for financing is at only 21 per cent.

The Ukrainian Government has also been unable or unwilling to bring all the punitive battalions under its control, in accordance with paragraph 10 of the Minsk agreement. They continue to wreak havoc. For example, during the truce the Aydar troops in the Luhansk region switched to extorting and abusing civilians, including the elderly, trying to cross the line of contact on foot in order to get cash or buy food. After the Minsk agreement was reached on 12 February, a fair amount was done to implement important provisions on removing heavy weaponry, yet attacks on civilian towns and villages east of the boundary line nonetheless continued almost daily, terrorizing the local population.

I will cite just a few examples. On 28 May, three people, including an 11-year-old girl and her father, died in shelling in Horlivka, and many of the town's residents were injured. On 3 June, a massive bombardment of Donetsk killed at least six civilians died and wounded more than 90, besides which there was firing from the town of Marinka, as has been mentioned today, which appears to have provoked the latest escalation of military action. On 4 June, when Telmanovo was attacked by Ukrainian forces, shells hit a playground, killing a year-old infant.

Accusations have been levelled at the militias, but we can only ask ourselves why all we hear in statements from Kyiv is about military casualties, while there are reports from Donetsk and Luhansk of

the death of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure — hospitals, schools, kindergartens and houses. In that regard, we ask that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission not simply focus on the violations of the ceasefire agreement and on determining who violated it, but also describe clearly what the targets of those attacks were and whether their victims were civilians or military units firing on residential areas. We must have a clear picture of what is happening in Donbas and who is committing violations not just of the Minsk agreement but also of the norms of international humanitarian law.

Against that background, it is surprising to see the indifference of our Western partners, who are usually so fond of pontificating about humanitarian issues. Furthermore, there is no end to the shipments of military supplies, including armoured vehicles, along with the hundreds of instructors sent to train the Ukrainian forces. There have been numerous reports of sightings near Donbas of foreign mercenaries and private military companies. Is that not a direct encouragement to a resumption of hostilities, not to mention a clear violation of paragraph 10, which provides for the withdrawal of foreign armed forces, military equipment and mercenaries from Ukrainian territory?

For all practical purposes, it is no secret that Kyiv has used the Minsk truce to rebuild and regroup its forces, which is why the latest outbreak of hostilities, while seriously worrying, is hardly surprising. However, we should not ignore the fact that it occurred after a series of very positive meetings between the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups, most recently in Minsk on 2 June. And although they have yet to reach a final agreement, there has been progress on every issue under discussion, including on such complex subjects as the demilitarization of Shirokino and including mortars with a calibre under 100 millimetres on the list of excluded weapons.

Definite progress has been made on the question of starting direct consultations between Kyiv and Luhansk and Donetsk on preparing for the holding of local elections. That raises the suspicion that it is precisely this positive news that is linked to the armed provocations being conducted against cities in Donbas. Perhaps Kyiv, particularly the so-called war party, has understood that it cannot continue to sabotage the implementation package forever. Even the capitals that are most loyal to Kyiv have begun to betray signs of irritation, saying that the Kyiv authorities have overstepped the bounds of decency in violating or simply ignoring the Minsk agreement. And military action is the most reliable diversionary manoeuvre, since one can blame anything on the war.

This is a critical moment. If we continue to allow Kyiv to drag its feet in taking what are absolutely essential political steps regarding Donbas, the situation may again spiral out of control, with unpredictable consequences. We urge the members of the Council with influence over the Kyiv authorities to make every effort to ensure that this does not occur.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Alexander Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for their briefings.

The latest developments on the ground are worrying. I refer of course to the resumption of fighting on Wednesday in Marinka, west of Donetsk, and of the increase in incidents at numerous points on the front line. According to the information we have, the attack was launched by separatist troops in violation of the commitments made in Minsk on 12 February. We firmly condemn all violations of the ceasefire declared in February and urge the parties to respect their commitments under the Minsk agreement's implementation package.

It is clear, however, that the fighting, which is at a level of intensity not seen since February and the attack on Debaltseve, comes primarily from limited forces in a sector that has already been the scene of several violations of the ceasefire, to our regret. As far as we know, the separatist forces amount to a half-battalion supported by armoured elements and they have been halted. The situation, however, presents a number of features that call for extreme vigilance, particularly the concentration of heavy weapons that violate the Minsk agreement, which must be stopped immediately. Similarly, the presence among the separatists of many foreign fighters who are radicalized, bellicose and undisciplined shows that Moscow must do more, and do better, to control the actions of the separatists and mercenaries.

The deterioration of the situation on the ground should not detract from the overall situation in Ukraine. Despite the attack, the Minsk process is ongoing

and there are true signs of hope. From the security perspective, the Minsk process has launched a positive momentum, even if it has been only unevenly applied to date. The average number of victims per day has dropped significantly since the adoption of the Minsk package on 12 February. More than 2,500 Ukrainian soldiers have been released.

Furthermore, at the second level of the process, there have recently been tenuous but encouraging developments in the political process. In particular, the working groups proposed by Ms. Tagliavini in her statement before the Council three months ago (see S/PV.7400) have been established and have already met. Discussions are still getting off the ground. They have been delayed by numerous signs of distrust and sensitivity on both sides. We note that in the groups, substantial and productive debates have achieved tangible progress on organizing elections in the separatist zone. In particular, a voting method for the separatist zone has been accepted by all, and that is a positive sign that touches on one of the key aspects of the crisis.

Similarly, the Trilateral Contact Group, the cornerstone of the implementation of the Minsk agreements, within which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and plays a crucial role pursuant to resolution 2202 (2015), has met on several occasions. In that regard, we regret the change of heart of the Russian party which, in leaving the discussion table with great fanfare on Tuesday, is attempting to impose the separatists as the sole Ukrainian interlocutors in that forum. We remind Russia, a member of the Trilateral Contact Group and, more than any other party, subject to the provisions of resolution 2202 (2015), that it cannot shirk its obligations. The conflict in Ukraine is not a domestic crisis in which Russia can simply play the role of well-meaning mediator between two camps. Everyone knows the role that it has played in the crisis from the start, and Russia has been paying the consequences since then.

We are at a moment of truth in the Ukrainian crisis. The future of the Trilateral Contact Group is at stake and we cannot allow that crucial part of the diplomatic framework, which was put together so painstakingly, to be simply withdrawn and disqualified, particularly as it was endorsed by the Council in resolution 2202 (2015). More broadly, we must do all we can to maintain the momentum and methodology that we have used up til now. Our priority must be the full implementation of both the security and political aspects of the Minsk package, which must enter into force simultaneously before the end of the year. Respect for the timeframe established in Minsk is crucial and in our opinion it is unacceptable that it be allowed to slide. The timeframe is ambitious, but the Minsk process is the only possible means to avoid a resumption of violence from which no one would benefit.

A Normandy format follow-up meeting of political experts will take place in Paris on 10 June. We call on Russia to stop trying to extricate itself from the negotiating process and to exercise its responsibility over the separatists. It is, moreover, important to stress to the Kyiv authorities that they must begin a real dialogue with the separatists in order to organize local elections in full respect for the Minsk timeframe, and to implement the decentralization of Ukraine. When proposals made by the separatists are unacceptable to Ukraine, it must respond with its own so that the negotiations can move forward.

At this crucial moment in the implementation of the Minsk process, our commitment is more important than ever. The commitment of France is unwavering. In the context of the Normandy format, France and Germany will continue to bring pressure to bear on the parties to ensure that the OSCE enjoys the freedom of movement it requires to perform the tasks entrusted to it under the Minsk agreements, particularly in terms of monitoring the ceasefire and the withdrawal of weapons.

Finally, we recall our commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial independence of Ukraine within its international recognized borders.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank you, Sir, for organizing today's meeting to speak to the recent developments in eastern Ukraine. join others in thanking our briefers, Under Secretary-General Feltman and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Deputy Chief Monitor Hug, for providing the Council and the international community with the facts underlining the escalation in violence, which are critical in a conflict where some continue to try to obscure the truth.

On 3 June, combined Russian-separatist forces launched multiple, coordinated attacks west of the Minsk line of contact in Donetsk. The attacks were concentrated on the towns of Marinka and Krasnohorivka. The Russian Federation and its

separatist allies have offered multiple, often conflicting explanations for those attacks. In some instances, Russia and the separatists have blamed Ukraine for inciting the attacks. For example, a Russian presidential spokesman attributed the violations of the ceasefire to the "provocative actions of the Ukrainian armed forces", claiming that "the Ukrainian side has repeatedly made similar efforts to escalate tensions against the backdrop of international operations".

Similarly, the so-called Defence Minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic blamed Ukraine for provocations and what he called a breach of the Minsk agreements that led to the fighting. Exactly what the so-called provocations are was never explained. This set of arguments has been undermined by some of the separatists themselves, who seem to have forgotten to run their tweets and their blog posts by Moscow. During the attacks, one tweeted: "Marinka is ours", posting a photograph of armed soldiers atop a tank flying the separatist flag. A post on a separatist website said: "As a result of a massive attack by armed forces of the Donetsk People's Republic, Marinka has been liberated".

In other instances, Russia has argued that the attacks were justified because the areas that are actually part of the separatist-controlled territory under the Minsk agreements are these areas. They are not. That was the case that Russia made about Marinka and Krasnohorivka yesterday at a meeting of the OSCE. We have seen this tactic before when combined Russian-separatist forces encircled and attacked Debaltseve immediately after signing the package of measures at Minsk on 12 February. As separatist commander Eduard Basurin told Reuters on 15 February:

> "Of course we can open fire on Debaltseve. The territory is internal — ours. And internal is internal. But along the line of confrontation there is no shooting".

The problem with this line of argument is quite simply that it is false. At no point did the Minsk agreements recognize Marinka and Krasnohorivka as separatist-controlled territory, nor did they grant the separatists control over Debaltseve or other areas that combined Russian-separatist forces have seized or tried to seize. Yet, for Russia and the separatists, it seems the contact line can shift to include the territories that they feel they deserve. The Kyiv-born surrealist master Mikhail Bulgakov put this problem a different way: "The tongue can conceal the truth, but the eyes never." In this case, the objective eyes in eastern Ukraine belong to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, and what it tells us is that on the evening of 2 June and in the early morning of 3 June, the Mission

> "observed the movement of a large amount of heavy weapons in areas controlled by the Donetsk People's Republic, generally in a westerly direction towards the contact line, close to Marinka, preceding and during the fighting".

To repeat, according to the Special Monitoring Mission, heavy weapons from the Russian-backed separatist side moved westward preceding as well as during the fighting. The Mission tried to contact high-ranking Donetsk People's Republic personnel over an hour-and-a-half period on the morning of 3 June but reported: "Either they were unavailable or did not wish to speak to the SMM".

The eyes do not conceal the truth, and the truth here is that the recent violence was rooted in a combined Russian-separatist assault. Those and other joint attacks by Russian-separatist forces have deadly consequences. At least five Ukrainian soldiers were killed and 38 wounded in the assault on the towns. The number of casualties is surely higher, but we do not, unfortunately, have reliable reports from the separatist side. That is because, as the United Nations human rights monitoring unit noted in its report of 15 May, independent media have been prosecuted, threatened and otherwise muzzled in separatist-controlled territory.

We also do not know how many Russian soldiers were killed in recent attacks, or in any of their operations in eastern Ukraine for that matter. Russia continues, despite incidents such as the recent capture of two special operations Russian soldiers in Shchastya last month, to deny any military involvement in eastern Ukraine. And just last week President Putin signed a decree classifying any death of Russian soldiers in "special operations" in peacetime a State secret — a policy which previously was limited to wartime only. Not content with denying their military service in life, Russia now denies their loved ones respect and closure, not to mention social services, for their service in death. It denies the Russian people knowledge to which they are entitled of a conflict their Government has been fuelling with weapons, training and soldiers. No matter what is one's opinion of the open secret that is Russia's military involvement in eastern Ukraine and occupied Crimea, the dignified recognition of one's dead should have primacy.

Of course, suffering is hardly limited to those involved in the fighting. Civilians living near and along the front lines continue to endure profound hardship. Approximately 1.3 million Ukrainians have been displaced by the fighting. Small children on the front lines have become used to going to school and sleeping in basements. Families live underground for months at a time. The elderly and disabled are trapped, with little access to vital medicines and other forms of assistance. A health professional working in Debaltseve said,

> "I have met elderly people who say that they would just like to die. They do not have depression; they just do not want to be 80 years old and living in a basement."

By now, the international community is quite familiar with Russia's playbook when it comes to efforts to occupy the territory of its sovereign neighbours, as it did it Crimea and before that in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The consensus here and in the international community remains that Minsk's implementation is the only viable way out of this deadly conflict.

The Ukrainian Government has made good-faith efforts to honour that consensus, notwithstanding the seemingly endless violations by Russia and the separatists, and to deliver on the commitments made at Minsk. Ukraine is holding direct dialogue with the separatists — a bitter pill to swallow, but one that they have swallowed for the sake of peace and for the sake of the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

At the same time, Ukraine has undertaken critical efforts, with the participation of Ukrainian civil society, to address pervasive problems that it inherited from its predecessors, like widespread corruption, as well as to pursue crucial reforms such as decentralization. Ukraine cooperates with the international monitors and bodies and has committed to addressing identified areas of concern. The United States will continue to raise tough issues and those areas of concern, including some raised here today by the briefers, with the Government of Ukraine, and we will support the Government and the Ukrainian people as they continue their efforts towards meaningful reform.

Yet Russia — and the separatists that it trains, arms and fights alongside and with whom it shares command-and-control systems in eastern Ukraine — continues to ignore the consensus. Flouting the commitments it made at Minsk, it goes right on applying its playbook in new territories, as though the Council and the world are too blind or too easily deceived to notice. We must not let ourselves be deceived. The consequences of Russia's contempt for Minsk and the rules undergirding our international peace and security are too great both for the integrity of the international system and for the rights and welfare of the Ukrainian people.

We cannot fail to see and fail to act. We must not stop applying pressure until Ukrainians get the stable democracy, territorial integrity and sovereignty they yearn for and deserve.

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Alexander Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, for their exhaustive briefings this morning.

The relative improvement of the security situation in eastern Ukraine over the past two months has had a positive effect between the parties at the political level, despite the fact that the progress achieved has been slow and limited. Nevertheless, it is our conviction that halting stabilization efforts would be inappropriate. We therefore will continue to promote stability throughout Ukrainian territory through strengthening respect for the ceasefire agreement, limiting the conflict and preventing its spread to other regions. The Security Council and the international community must therefore provide every type of support to the parties and help them overcome all obstacles and difficulties in order to implement the peace agreements reached between them.

Jordan expresses its concern over the continuing violations of the ceasefire between the Ukrainian Government and the separatists, as well as the increased number of violations in recent days, together with the increase in the degree of violence in some parts of eastern Ukraine, particularly in the region of Donetsk and neighbouring towns. The continuing military confrontations and provocative acts and their expansion will only further complicate the situation and nullify the peace agreements reached between the parties. That will have an impact on all of the outstanding issues between the parties and worsen the economic, social and humanitarian situation even further. Such a situation will threaten the security and stability of the entire region.

Jordan invites all parties to assume their responsibilities and to emphasize constructive and direct dialogue, as well as positive discussions among them under the Normandy format, in order to reach a peaceful settlement of the crisis. We reiterate the fact that the only solution to the crisis depends on full respect by all parties — particularly the separatists — of the Minsk agreements on the ceasefire, as well as of resolution 2202 (2015). Those agreements and all of their provisions must be implemented globally without exception, particularly with regard to halting the illicit transfer of heavy weaponry and to its full withdrawal, together with the withdrawal of foreign fighters from eastern Ukraine.

Jordan welcomes the recent meeting held by the Trilateral Contact Group working group. It is a positive step forward, and it requires that all parties continue to hold such meetings regularly, on the basis of the Minsk agreements. Achieving a diplomatic solution and promoting common language and points of agreement among the parties on certain areas of some agreements are essential and vital to reach a lasting peace that meets the ambitions and requirements of the parties and the stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Jordan appreciates all of the efforts carried out by the OSCE in eastern Ukraine and reiterates that it has a crucial role in monitoring borders and the ceasefire, in addition to facilitating humanitarian access. We call upon all parties to facilitate the work of that organization and allow it to have access to all affected regions in order to ensure the provision of basic services to citizens. It is important that citizens, and refugees in particular, avoid involvement in political diversions or confrontations. They must be provided with the social and humanitarian services necessary for daily subsistence.

We pay tribute to the important role of the OSCE in preparing local elections, and we hope that these elections will soon be organized in eastern Ukraine, pursuant to the Minsk agreements.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Mr. Hug for their briefings today. It is important to note the positive elements in those briefings, in particular that the ceasefire had generally been holding — if imperfectly and with frequent violations.

But as they have also told the Council, there are serious problems on the ground. Every day Ukrainian citizens are being killed and Ukrainian towns besieged, and the Ukrainian economy continues to suffer, all as a consequence of continued aggression by separatist forces supported by Russia and in violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

As Mr. Feltman and Mr. Hug have also reminded us, the conflict is taking a huge toll on the Ukrainian people. Ukraine now has the dubious honour of being among the top 10 countries for the number of internally displaced persons and, worse, humanitarian relief supplies are not getting through. We strongly support Mr. Feltman's call on both the Government of Ukraine and the separatist forces to lift the restraints on access to humanitarian relief.

In February, the Council adopted resolution 2202 (2015), endorsing the Minsk package of measures and calling on the parties to implement them fully, including an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. As we have been told, the fulfilment of these commitments remains imperfect at best, but, at worst, those commitments have been disregarded. We deem the Council's ongoing scrutiny to be crucial.

The package of measures mandated that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would support the process of restoring peace, including by monitoring and verifying compliance. Yet the OSCE faces a major obstacle in carrying out this role due to its inability to access conflict areas. The monitors are obstructed from doing their job due to the security risks associated with ceasefire violations, or because of restrictions imposed on them.

It is imperative that all sides ensure that the OSCE be granted the access necessary for it to fulfil its role as envisaged in the Minsk measures. We call on Russia to use its influence over the separatists to ensure that what was agreed in Minsk is implemented and that the OSCE monitors are able to perform their jobs in areas under separatist control. The important work that OSCE monitors are doing on the ground is often difficult and dangerous. We commend them, but their security and safety must continue to be protected.

New Zealand remains very concerned about the situation in eastern Ukraine. We condemn the violence seen this week in Marinka, and reiterate the call for restraint made by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.

Heavy weapons must be withdrawn from the contact line and a true ceasefire must be respected. The costs of the conflict continue to mount. A lasting solution is needed. Genuine engagement in the political process laid out in the Minsk agreements, in particular the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups, will be critical to restoring peace and ending suffering.

As detailed in the latest report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Ukrainian people continue to be subject to serious human rights abuses. Until the package of measures is implemented, including a comprehensive ceasefire, the biggest losers, as always, will be the people of Ukraine. But the other loss will be the long history of close friendship between Russia and Ukraine. That cannot be good for either country.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and the Deputy Chief Monitor of the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, Mr. Alexander Hug, for their briefings on recent developments in the situation in Ukraine.

We are deeply disturbed by the evolving turn of events in eastern Ukraine. The ceasefire brokered in Minsk is holding in general, despite difficulties with localized violations of the ceasefire and the persistent dire humanitarian situation, the increasing number of displaced people and persistent killings, as detailed in the latest report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. However, the large-scale military operations of the past few days represent a real setback to the expectations we nourished for a real consolidation of the ceasefire as a step towards tangible progress towards sustainable peace in Ukraine.

As we have stated on previous occasions when this issue has been brought to the attention of the Security Council, we reiterate our recognition of the inalienable right of Ukraine to its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We also reaffirm our principal opposition to threats or use of force as a means of solving disputes among States.

Therefore and in conclusion, we call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and urge the parties to return to the negotiating table in the framework of the Trilateral Contact Group. We call for the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the full return to the provisions of the Minsk package of measures. We further request that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission be given access to monitor and verify the parties' full compliance with the Minsk agreements. Too much blood has been shed and too much senseless suffering has already been endured by the Ukrainian people. We urge strict respect for the international commitments agreed to in Minsk and international guarantees that the people of Ukraine may be allowed to live in peace, freedom and security.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela thanks you, Mr. President, for convening this briefing on Ukraine. We also welcome Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Alexander Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, for the information they have given us.

Our country expresses its concern at the recent escalation in the armed conflict as a result of the fighting in Marinka and other cities west of Donetsk, which have led to the loss of human life and injuries. Venezuela reiterates its call on the parties to promote a peaceful political negotiated solution to this crisis. We also urge them to respect international humanitarian law, in particular the obligation to ensure the protection of civilians.

We insist on the full implementation of resolution 2202 (2015), in support of the decision reached by the negotiators of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany on 12 February in Minsk. We must pursue efforts to achieve a political and diplomatic solution to the Ukrainian crisis, in which the parties would commit to working towards a firm and lasting peace. A definitive end to the hostilities therefore remains an objective that cannot be postponed. Any incident should be investigated independently on the basis of reliable evidence that should lead to the adoption of measures that meet the aspirations for peace and stability of the populations affected by the conflict.

To that end, the parties must continue to demonstrate good will to achieve a joint agreement. In that regard, the mediation and efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe deserve the support of the Council, and all parties should facilitate its work. We must fulfil the agreements reached in Minsk to address the underlying causes of this conflict and respect the political and human rights of all those living in that territory, irrespective of their ethnic origin. We encourage the implementation of the provisions of the

Minsk agreement that are being implemented by the Trilateral Contact Group. In that regard, on 6 May we were informed of the establishment of four working groups assigned to the areas of security, political affairs, internally displaced persons and refugees, and humanitarian assistance, as well as economic issues and rehabilitation.

The parties must move to restore conditions conducive to the maintenance of dialogue, with the support of the international community. That is the only way to channel the concerns of all parties in order to find a solution to this conflict. We cannot allow to prevail a propagandistic environment that incites confrontation and ethnic hatred, or the thousands of accusations that contribute only to fanning the conflict and exacerbating the situation, all of which are preventing the implementation of the Minsk Agreement.

Venezuela insists on restraint in order to prevent the dialogue from being affected by unilateral actions that would jeopardize the peace process. In that regard, my country rejects the application of unilateral coercive sanctions, which violate international law and erode the necessary trust between the parties.

Finally, we reiterate our call on all parties to redouble their efforts in the search for a just and lasting political solution to the benefit of their peoples.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Jeffrey Feltman and Alexander Hug for their briefings. I would also like to thank Malaysia for having convened this meeting of the Security Council involving the application of resolution 2202 (2015), in which we made a commitment to closely follow up the situation in that area.

Unfortunately, in the past few days we have seen events that have made this meeting necessary. We have listened to the briefers talk about a serious worsening of the situation. I believe that everyone here agrees that the Minsk agreements are the only tool we have. Promoted by France and Germany, they were accepted by the parties and endorsed by the Security Council. Consequently, we must give them our full and unconditional support. However, during the past weeks, there have been major violations, and we have listened to very detailed explanations of the situation in Marinka. In the end, what is happening?

What is happening is that those who must face the consequences are always the civilian population. The figures speak for themselves. We have heard the figures of 1.3 million displaced persons, of 600,000 newly displaced in a relatively short period of time. This occurred in a country, Ukraine, that previously was not on the list of the internally displaced persons but now unfortunately figures on the list of the top ten. It is a tragic situation in Donbas, and there are major difficulties in humanitarian access for both personnel and supplies. The humanitarian response of the international community has been insufficient.

Accordingly, Spain calls anew for an immediate ceasefire and for the subsequent and also immediate withdrawal of heavy weapons. We call upon Russia to exercise all of its influence and to require from the rebel groups the immediate and strict implementation of what has been agreed, thus complying also with its obligation as a signatory to the Minsk agreements. We also call on Ukraine to continue to move forward in complying with the commitments undertaken in Minsk, including the non-military components of the agreement. I trust that at the next meeting, on 10 June, in the Normandy format, we will have seen progress and be able to say that the Security Council meeting today was useful in reaching that goal.

Like the Ambassador of New Zealand, I would also like to refer to the disturbing situation regarding respect for human rights and the serious violations that we have seen. I trust that there will be no situation of impunity, as has been the case in other parts of the globe.

With respect to the OSCE, I will make two brief comments. Spain is concerned by the difficulties that the OSCE Mission is encountering in complying with its obligations, and we would like it to share, without delay, the information that has been requested. Spain also supports the extension of the OSCE mandate. Hopefully, it will enjoy access to an area somewhat larger than the 1 per cent to which the Ambassador of Lithuania referred.

Lastly, any lasting and sustainable solution necessarily involves respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Mr. Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

It is disturbing that the Council must again return to this issue, since fighting has flared up and Russian-backed separatists have broken the ceasefire

provided for in the Minsk agreements. The fighting on Wednesday around Marinka and Kyivsky was an alarming escalation of violence in eastern Ukraine. It is clear from the OSCE spot report that this was a separatist assault on Ukrainian military units. The OSCE observed heavy weapons mobilizing in the territory controlled by the so-called Donetsk People's Republic. Those weapons moved westward, in complete disregard of the terms of the Minsk agreements. Action of that kind and on that scale was clearly premeditated.

We have previously seen Russian-backed separatists seek to provoke a Ukrainian response and then twist that — as the Russian media are again seeking to do — into claims that it was the Ukrainians who launched an assault. These feints are transparent, and Russian claims and those of their separatist proxies carry no credibility. The world is watching. We know who is supporting the separatists. We have seen Russian soldiers captured in the Donbas. We have heard Russia's attempts to come up with innocent explanations for their presence there. We have noted the amendments to the Russian State secrecy law, which now prohibits the release of information about the deaths of soldiers in peacetime. This legislative action suggests that the Russian authorities want to silence the justified questions they are facing from families, journalists and civil society. We have seen Russian-supplied T-72 tanks and Uragan rocket launchers operating on Ukrainian soil, and we have seen countless conveys of supplies flooding across the border from Russia. Russia claims these are humanitarian supplies but will not cooperate with the legitimate Government in Kyiv in a way that allow for verification of these claims.

The tragedy and the hypocrisy of the separatists is that the ordinary people of Ukraine are the ones who suffer. More than 6,000 have been killed, and more than 1.3 million have fled their homes. We hope that Mr. Šimonović, of the High Commissioner's Office, will be able to brief the Council on his recent report on the distressing human rights situation in eastern Ukraine later this month. There are three things that now need to happen to prevent further escalation.

First, Russia must immediately withdraw its military forces from Ukraine, stop its flow of weapons to the separatists and make every effort to secure a political solution to this crisis. This includes the immediate release of Nadiya Savchenko, who has been illegally detained for nearly a year.

Secondly, we urge Russia to use its considerable influence on the separatists so that they cease their provocative behaviour and live up to their commitment to implement fully the Minsk agreements. The separatists forces are Russia's creation; they are Russia's tool. Russia has the capacity and the influence to control the separatist forces. It must exercise that influence to ensure compliance with the Minsk agreements. If it is not ready to do so, the Council must be clear in its condemnation.

Thirdly, it is vital that all parties engage seriously in the process and implement the Minsk agreements. The Trilateral Contact Group and Trilateral working groups are essential mechanisms for making this happen, and their roles are clearly spelled out in paragraph 13 of the February Minsk agreement. We need all parties, both Russians and Ukrainians, to engage in these groups in a genuine and constructive way. We were disturbed to hear that the economic working group was not able to meet earlier this week because a Russian participant did not attend and that Russian and separatists participants walked out of a session of the Trilateral Contact Group.

The European Union has made clear that the duration of sanctions against Russia is directly linked to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements, and through resolution 2202 (2015) this Council has made clear that we too expect complete compliance with the Minsk agreements. So there is no military solution. The Minsk agreements are the only way that stability can be restored in eastern Ukraine. We must all recommit to their implementation and to upholding the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Let us not forget that the crisis started with the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia. More than a year since that illegal annexation, we cannot lose sight of what is at stake in eastern Ukraine. A return to violence and conflict would come at a terrible human cost for all sides, and it would represent a further attack on the rules-based international system that we have shared and valued for the past 70 years. We all depend on that system enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Any escalation in Ukraine calls into question Russia's commitment to those principles.

Our relationship to Russia extends far beyond the borders of Ukraine, but in order to foster the cooperation and trust we want, those relationships must be based on honesty, mutual respect and dialogue. Until Russia is

able to demonstrate that commitment in Ukraine, the Council needs to remain actively engaged in overseeing the full and timely implementation of resolution 2202 (2015).

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Feltman and Mr. Hug for their briefings. In February, the leaders of Russia, France, Germany and Ukraine reached an important consensus in Minsk on the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2202 (2015), endorsing the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements by the parties concerned, which reflected support for a political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. After the Council's adoption of the resolution, progress was made in such areas as the ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the establishment of working groups, as outlined in the Minsk package of measures.

For some time, the overall situation in eastern Ukraine remained stable and a ceasefire was generally observed. Recently, the situation in eastern Ukraine has again deteriorated. China calls on the parties concerned to keep calm, exercise restraint, consolidate the hard-won ceasefire and press ahead with a political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis in order to achieve peace and tranquillity in Ukraine at an early date. The international community should make joint efforts in that direction. The Council's discussion should also play a constructive role in that regard.

China has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, including Ukraine, and it believes that dialogue and consultations are the only solution to the Ukrainian issue. China calls on the parties concerned to make joint efforts to find a comprehensive, balanced and lasting political solution as soon as possible so as to achieve peace, tranquillity, stability and development in Ukraine and the region as a whole. China will continue to play a constructive role in promoting a political settlement of the Ukrainian issue.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Alexander Hug for their briefings on the situation in Ukraine.

We reiterate our support for the ongoing steps taken by the Secretary-General and the United Nations to bring an end to the situation in Ukraine, and we support the vital work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in mediating the conflict and implementing the Minsk agreements. We express our deep concern over the recent escalation of violence in Ukraine. As we have stated on many occasions, we believe that full compliance with the ceasefire, monitored and verified by the Special Monitoring Mission of the OSCE under the provisions of the Minsk agreements, and dialogue between the parties is the only way to achieve lasting peace.

We underscore the importance of strengthening the rule of law and the obligation to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, General Assembly resolution 68/262 and international law. We have also reaffirmed on many occasions the importance of upholding those principles, which we consider indispensable. We regret the deterioration of the security situation and its serious consequences for the civilian population, which continues to suffer human rights violations and abuses. We urge the parties to respect human rights, including full respect for the rights of minorities, and we call for the perpetrators of such violations to be brought to justice. We recall that accountability is also a way of implementing the Minsk agreements.

The complexity of the crisis in eastern Ukraine is not limited to the security sphere. More than 5 million people require humanitarian assistance, and the number of internally displaced persons and those seeking refuge continues to increase, making it is urgent to address the problem. It is also crucial to ensure rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to the affected population, and all parties must respect international humanitarian law. The international community should help alleviate the crisis. We appeal to donors to contribute to the 2015 Ukraine humanitarian response plan, which so far has been funded at only 29 per cent.

We are at a critical juncture when it is imperative that the Council reiterates a message to the parties on the importance of creating conditions for the effective implementation of the Minsk agreements. The facts reveal that apprehensions about the precariousness of effective enforcement have some merit in the context of structural tensions. Only political dialogue within the framework of the Minsk agreements could help to overcome those critical cycles of violence.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Alexander Hug, Deputy

Chief Monitor of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, for their briefings.

Chad is deeply concerned over the resumption on 3 June of violent encounters between the Ukrainian army and separatist groups in the area of Marinka, approximately 30 kilometres from Donetsk. The fighting with heavy artillery, including Grad rocket launcers and cannons, has claimed a high number of victims on both sides. Chad strongly condemns the resurgence of violence, in violation of the Minsk agreements, which established a ceasefire and should have opened the way towards a comprehensive settlement of the conflict through dialogue. Since 12 February, incursions have been reported every day, demonstrating that the ceasefire has merely mitigated the intensity of the fighting and limited it to certain areas around Donetsk and Luhansk. Nevertheless, the increased tensions of recent days in the conflict zone raise fears of a serious threat of escalation that could thrust Ukraine into civil war on a larger scale and thereby seriously undermine the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Chad is convinced that the solution to the Ukrainian situation is a political one that largely depends on the resolve of the parties concerned to commit themselves to a genuine negotiation process in order to reach sustainable peace. To that end, we reiterate our appeal to the parties to return to calm and restraint in order to avoid a new spiral of violence and to resume the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

The human cost of the Ukrainian crisis is very heavy. More than 6,500 people have been killed, 11,000 wounded and more than 1 million displaced internally. Chad therefore urges all parties to take the path of a direct and inclusive dialogue aimed at achieving a political settlement of the crisis.

In conclusion, we encourage the countries and organizations that have any influence on the parties to spare no efforts to bring them to firmly commit to seeking a lasting political solution to the crisis while respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I would like to thank Mr. Feltman,Under-Secretary-General, and Mr. Hug, Deputy Chief Monitor for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for their very lucid briefings.

The recent escalation of fighting in eastern Ukraine is very disturbing, as we have all heard from members of the Council this morning. Reports of the large-scale offensive by separatists in Marinka on 4 June, which resulted in the deaths of over 20 persons, underscores the fragility of the situation. There is a risk that the ceasefire of February 2015 may totally collapse if the unrelenting violations persist. We urge both sides to take deliberate and concrete steps to de-escalate the situation. We all agree that the fulcrum of such a de-escalation is the Minsk agreement. Indeed, it was designed to stabilize the situation. It is therefore vital that the parties act in accordance with their obligations under the Minsk agreement.

Need we reiterate at this point, in the Council, that a military solution to this crisis is unattainable? We would like to encourage both sides to work diligently and move purposefully towards achieving a political settlement that is negotiated, with justice and peace as the guiding principles. We would like to see the conflict resolved in a manner that takes into account the concerns of the separatists while unreservedly respecting the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Ukraine.

We would like to pay tribute this morning to the leadership and staff of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission for their unrelenting efforts in monitoring the ceasefire. The regular media updates by the Mission have enabled us to follow closely not only its achievements but also the challenges it encounters. We encourage the parties and all stakeholders to continue to give their full cooperation to the Mission to facilitate its very essential role.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malaysia.

I join my colleagues in expressing our appreciation to Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Alexander Hug for their comprehensive briefings.

Malaysia is greatly alarmed by the recent escalation in fighting in eastern Ukraine. We have heard from the briefers on the gravity of the recent situation, which is the worst since the signing of the Minsk agreement in February 2015. We join other Council members in strongly urging all parties to fully comply with the provisions of the Minsk agreement, as stipulated in resolution 2202 (2015). We also call for the parties to cooperate fully with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring

Mission in order to enable them to carry out their mandate as laid out in the Minsk agreement.

Malaysia welcomes the progress made thus far in the implementation of the Minsk agreement. Until very recently, the ceasefire has generally been respected, despite incidents of low-intensity and sporadic fighting. We note that both sides withdrew heavy weapons in the early months after the signing of the Minsk agreement.

We welcome and commend the establishment of four working groups in the context of the Trilateral Contact Group, focusing on political, security, economic and humanitarian issues.

On a related note, I would like to highlight that the overall improvement in the security situation between March and April 2015 due to the ceasefire has allowed for the return of an international team, including Malaysian personnel, to complete the recovery mission for Malaysia Airlines flight MH-17. We regret the fact that it took the Malaysian recovery team almost a year following the downing of the aircraft to be able to enter the crash site due to the ongoing fighting in eastern Ukraine. As our team recently managed to collect more remains and belongings of the victims of flight MH-17, we were provided with a grim reminder of the tragic humanitarian costs of the conflict in Ukraine.

As we have heard from the briefers, whatever progress made in implementing the Minsk agreement is still far from irreversible. Despite claims by both sides that heavy weapons have been withdrawn, we remain concerned that movements or presence of weapons in violation of the Minsk agreement have been observed by the Monitoring Mission. Inspections by the Mission of heavy-weapon holding areas also found some weapons missing or unaccounted for.

With the most recent clashes in Marinka, the Minsk agreement is in real danger of unravelling. The civilian population, in particular children, would undoubtedly bear the brunt of an escalation in the situation. It is heart-wrenching that as of 15 May 2015, over 160,000 children have been internally displaced in eastern Ukraine, 68 killed and almost 200 injured. Children continue to live with their families in bomb shelters and to be internally displaced and deprived of basic necessities such as water and health care.

We would remind all parties of their obligations under international law and international humanitarian law, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians. We also urge all parties to allow for safe and unrestricted humanitarian access to those in need.

The parties to the conflict must take a step back from the spiralling violence in Ukraine and recommit themselves to the full implementation of the Minsk agreement. We reiterate our commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We appeal to the conflicting parties not to lose the opportunity for peace once again.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of June.

It is of high importance that the Security Council is holding a meeting on the current situation in and around Ukraine. I would like to express my gratitude to our briefers, Mr. Jeffrey Feltman and Mr. Alexander Hug, for their important messages on the current situation on the ground and the measures taken by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to monitor the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

I would like to express my gratitude to all members of the Council for their dedication to the implementation of the Minsk agreements. I thank them for their solidarity.

Two days ago, we listened carefully to a lecture from the Russian delegation on what Ukraine is doing wrong. I would like to start by reminding the Russian authorities that Ukraine has a full right to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty, which are being challenged by Russia's occupation of Crimea and the aggression against our eastern regions. This right to defend ourselves is provided by our Constitution and the Charter of the United Nations — namely, Article 51 — and includes the right to invite other countries to help us with self-defence.

What are the legal sources to justify the Russian decision to send weapons, troops, mercenaries? There are none. No justification can be found in the Charter of the United Nations. That is why I would like to start by drawing the Security Council's attention to the Russian Federation's and the Russian-backed

terrorists' grave violations of the ceasefire and Minsk agreements in general, which were explicitly endorsed by resolution 2202 (2015).

On 3 June, the militants, with the direct backing of Russian regular armed forces, carried out a massive targeted assault on Ukrainian forces around Marinka as well as an attack near Shchastya. Some 1,000 persons, including Russian regular military cadre, and 30 tanks were engaged in the assault near Marinka. Ukrainian forces were shelled 82 times, including 11 times with the Grad system. Artillery fire was professionally coordinated, which also attests to the presence of Russian regular artillery crews.

These attacks were intended to test the defence and response capabilities of the Ukrainian forces and to seize control of territory and vital socioeconomic infrastructure — the Karlovske water reservoir, the Kurakhove and Shchastya power stations, and the Volnovakha railway hub. If the attackers had captured Marinka, they would have been able to seize positions from which they could impose an economic blockade on Mariupol, surround Ukrainian forces in Avdiivka and near Donetsk airport, thereby enabling a larger offensive along the front line. The Ukrainian anti-terrorist operation forces fought off these assaults. However, five servicemen were killed in action, four of them in Marinka, and 38 were wounded. Moreover, three civilians were reported dead.

Meanwhile, after the failure of the 3 June assault, Russian-backed terrorists continued attacks overnight. In the direction of Mariupol, the terrorists shelled Shyrokyne with artillery, mortars, grenade launchers and small arms. In the direction of Luhansk, the militants attacked Donetske, Novotoshkivske, Stanytsya Luhanska and Krymske. In the direction of Artemivsk, the terrorists shelled Zolote with grenade launchers and Leninske with small arms. In the direction of Donetsk, the terrorists attacked Pisky with mortars and Novotroitske with grenade launchers.

Russia and its proxies in Donbas have repeatedly violated the Minsk agreements of 5 and 19 September 2014 as well as of 12 February 2015. The assault near Mariynka became the second large-scale assault after the flagrant assault on Debaltseve in February. It occurred immediately after Russia's attempt to disrupt the meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group and its thematic subgroups in Minsk on 2 June. We are sure that the massive targeted assault around Marinka was planned in advance by the Russian Federation, and the conclusions of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission prove it. In particular,

> "Between 2230 hours on 2 June and 0530 hours on 3 June the [Mission] observed the movement of a large amount of heavy weapons in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic ... in a westerly direction towards the contact line — close to Marinka, preceding and during the fighting".

The Mission observed and tracked, inter alia, movements of armoured vehicles, including battle tanks, heavy artillery, military trucks and more. It is noteworthy that the Mission made several attempts to contact the high-ranking leaders of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic in order to facilitate a cessation of the fighting around Marinka, but without success. The so-called leaders did not respond to the Mission.

Ukraine has consistently and in good faith lived up to the Minsk agreements in full and tried to use all possible diplomatic leverage to deter escalation. Thanks to the Ukrainian Army's effective defence, Ukraine has avoided new wave of conflict escalation in Donbas and discouraged the Kremlin's attempts to subvert the provisions of both the resolution 2202 (2015) and the Minsk agreements by making accusations against the Ukrainian side. I would like to underscore that we promptly informed the OSCE Mission that Ukrainian armed forces' heavy weapons would be returned to the contact line in order to deal with the real threat posed by the fighting in Marinka and to defend civilians living in the local areas.

The recent provocative steps taken by the Russian side clearly indicate Russia's intentions to escalate the conflict and disrupt the Minsk process. The recent assaults are an attempt by the Russian side to exert military pressure on international players on the eve of important international events. The task of the Security Council is to prevent the aggressor from taking further destructive actions in this direction. We have to use all possible political and diplomatic leverage in this regard.

It is not only the OSCE Mission that continuously witnesses the deterioration of the situation on the ground. A few days ago, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published its tenth report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. It is important that the report clearly highlights the responsibility of the Russian Federation for the deterioration of the situation in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions

of Ukraine. In particular, it takes note of the Russian Federation's supplying modern types of heavy weaponry and mercenaries and widely confirms that crimes and human rights violations have been committed by militants with Russia's support. The difficult human rights situation in the temporarily occupied Crimea is also reflected in the document. The Office notes that the so-called Crimean authorities continue to restrict the rights of ethnic Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar people.

Let me go back to where I began. Taking into account Russia's serious violations of resolution 2202 (2015), I would kindly request that Security Council members promptly react to those provocations and violations and make every effort to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The international community previously stated that an assault on Mariupol would be a red line which, if crossed by Russia, would trigger an immediate and resolute response. In the light of the events of 3 June, the same approach should be applied to the Marinka case.

At the same time, we urge the Russian Federation and its proxies to immediately start fulfilling their obligations under the provisions of the Minsk agreements and resolution 2202 (2015). We demand that Russia withdraw its armed forces from Ukraine, stop fortifying the terrorist organizations with personnel and weapons, cease its destabilizing and provocative actions in Ukraine, and release all hostages. Russia must also end its occupation of Crimea, which remains an integral part of Ukraine.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will not go into a discussion with my Ukrainian colleague of the Charter of the United Nations, international law or international humanitarian law, for that matter, since too many of those instruments' provisions are being violated by the Kyiv authorities in their so-called anti-terrorist but in fact punitive operations in eastern Ukraine.

I would like to make a few comments with regard to the statement made by the representative of the United States of America. In her statement, she raised a very surprising issue — that of the Kyiv authorities' provocation of hostilities by their systematic, months-long attacks on cities. Is this not a provocation? Unfortunately, the Council does not see that or Kyiv's many other actions that violate the Minsk agreements and impede the implementation of the political provisions of the package of measures.

After the Sochi meeting with President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov, Mr. Kerry called upon Kyiv not to use force. Unfortunately, the request made by the representative of the United States was not heard. We would like United States diplomacy to be more consistent and to follow up on the pronouncements of its Secretary of State. We do not want to believe that there is a war party in Washington, D.C., like that in Kyiv.

We cannot agree with the statement by our British colleague that the crisis in Ukraine did not begin with the unification of Crimea and Russia. The crisis began with the externally supported campaign to overthrow a democratically elected President of Ukraine. It was exacerbated when efforts to implement the 21 February 2014 agreement failed. Political influences were also at work, followed by the terror in Odessa in May 2014 and the campaign we are seeing now in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Finally, in our discussion today we have heard a number of unfounded and extraordinarily polemical statements, but I would still like to suggest that this meeting has been helpful. We affirmed our commitment to the Minsk agreement and to resolution 2202 (2015). We think it important that various delegations called for direct dialogue between Kyiv, Donetsk and Luhansk. That theme was touched on even by the United States, although too timidly. That kind of dialogue is absolutely crucial to full compliance with the Minsk agreement, which Russia continues to strive for.

The President: The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Power (United States of America): In closing, I would just like to note the absurdity of two things. The first is the representative of the Russian Federation's citing of the Charter of the United Nations in the context of a discussion about Ukraine when, despite the fact that the Russian presence in Ukraine is an open secret, there is nothing secret about Russia's declared annexation of Crimea; and that what was once denied in this Chamber — namely, that Russian regular soldiers were in Crimea — is now an openly admitted part of the facts on the ground that Russia has created in Crimea, and is what we have seen consistently, as the story has

shifted. I think the representative of Ukraine asked a very important question. what is the legal authority for Russia's presence in eastern Ukraine? Where in the United Nations Charter is that stipulated?

The second irony is the great emphasis on a political process — an emphasis that everyone in the Council is deeply invested in. And yet Russia's response from start to finish in this crisis has been coercive and militarized. That emphasis on the political implementation — the core reality that there can only be a political solution — is something that we urge the Russian Federation to embrace not only in words but in actions on the ground.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be very brief. Fortunately, the Secretariat has established detailed protocols for the Security Council that cover all the questions that the representative of the United States touched on just now and that save me the trouble of a more extensive reaction to her remarks.

The President: There are no more requests for further statements.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.